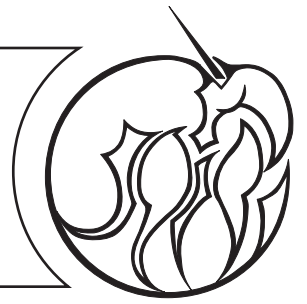


{ the avant-garde }

Katherine N. Crowley Fine Art & Design



PERIODIC JOURNAL VOLUME XIV No.5 SUMMER 2022



{sailors' valentines}



{sailors' valentines}

by Katherine N. Crowley

In the summer of 2020 my family had planned a trip to Martha's Vineyard, a small island off the coast of Cape Cod in Massachusetts. My father rented a house in Oak Bluffs. My husband, father, and I planned to drive 14 hours and take the fast ferry to the island. My sister Caroline and her boyfriend were to fly up from New Orleans. My sister Melinda, her husband, and her two children were to travel from Northern Virginia. We were all going to spend a week together doing family-fun activities such as riding the oldest carousel in the nation, go to the beach, and visit the famed Gingerbread Houses - Victorian era cottages centered around a Tabernacle. We had been planning the trip for over two years.

But COVID-19 had other plans.

Happily I can say COVID-19 only derailed our plans and did not present us with any health issues. For my part, I had been exposed to very few people for months and was looking forward to a change of scenery. Unfortunately, given all of the travel restrictions and health advisories, my sisters and their families had to cancel, leaving my husband, my father, and me, with a lovely vacation to an island where we were a little limited in what we could do. During the day we could spend time outside and wear masks around popular tourist attractions such as lighthouses and museums. But in the evening, we would not have much to do. Not wanting to fall prey to the draw of television while on vacation, we came up with the idea of doing a craft. We decided we would make our own Sailors' Valentines.

{what is a sailor's valentine?}

Legend has it, that sailors would while away their free time while onboard whaling and merchant ships by meticulously creating beautiful works of art with the only things of beauty they could find on the cruel ocean – sea shells. Dreaming of being reunited with their sweethearts back home in Nantucket, they would craft mosaic picture postcards from these jewels of the briny deep. After several months – or even years – at sea, they would present these exquisite works of art to their darlings who waited patiently for their return, climbing to the rooftop each night to see if their beloved sailors' ships had returned to port.

Sounds pretty good, huh? But sailors don't have free time. Life at sea is a constant slog of knowing ropes, swabbing decks, avoiding man-eating whales, "aye aye matey", and all that stuff. In fact, these keepsakes were likely purchased by sailors from the tourist trade in Barbados, the easternmost island in the Caribbean. It was often the last port of call for many sailors. It was also their last chance to get that special something before returning home to those who waited with open arms and ready hearts.



An example of a contemporary Sailor's Valentine by Judy Dinnick who incorporated hand painted scenes into her intricate sea shell constructions.

Above: *Barbados Bound* and a detail of the three-masted ship focal point.

{sailors' valentines}

{how is a sailor's valentine made?}

To be a true Sailor's Valentine, the shell mosaic must be in an octagonal box. Some dealers say that this shape comes from the compass boxes which served to protect one of the ship's most valuable assets: the compass. The other feature of a Sailor's Valentine is, of course, the shells. The pattern the shells create is unique to the individual who made the Valentine. There are about 100,000 specimens of shells world-wide, but only about 35 specimens appear in antique Sailors' Valentines. Valentines of old usually contain shells that are found commonly in the West Indies. Contemporary Valentines contain shells that are found all over the world.

Contemporary artists still create Sailors' Valentines fashioned after the originals made both by sailors and the tourist industry in Barbados.

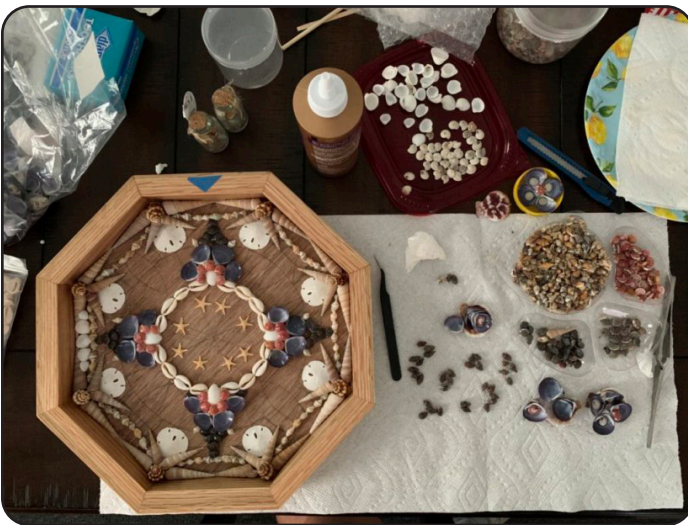
{how did we make our sailor's valentines?}

First we planned ahead. I mentioned this idea on a whim, and my husband Matt decided to make it a reality. Matt and I constructed the octagonal boxes before we got on the road. This project took about a month and we spent the 4th of July listening to fireworks and adhering all the pieces together.

We pre-purchased a lot of small shells, investigated the best glue to use – simple tacky glue was the recommendation by most experts – and looked at shell art online through Instagram. I began following an artist named Judy Dinnick, whose award-winning work encompasses some innovative shell constructions.

When we arrived I decided I wanted to go shopping at the local shops for some small popular culture items that I could include in my composition. I was specifically looking for a tiny ship-in-a-bottle and something that evoked Martha's Vineyard. I came across two embroidered patches featuring some of the Gingerbread Cottages. I planned to give my Valentine to Matt once it was complete. Matt wanted to make two Valentines: one to give to his parents and one to give to me. My Dad wanted to work in the rings from the historic Flying Horses Carousel, as well as colored sand and sea glass. We collected shells on the beach and bought some beautiful specimens from a little shop in Aquinnah.

Once we were settled into our week-long home, we commandeered the dining room table for our craft space. We sorted shells into little dishes, set up glue stations, and got to work. Each evening, after a full day of sight seeing we would work a little more on our creations.



Above: In-progress Sailors' Valentines and the materials used to make them.

{katie's valentine}



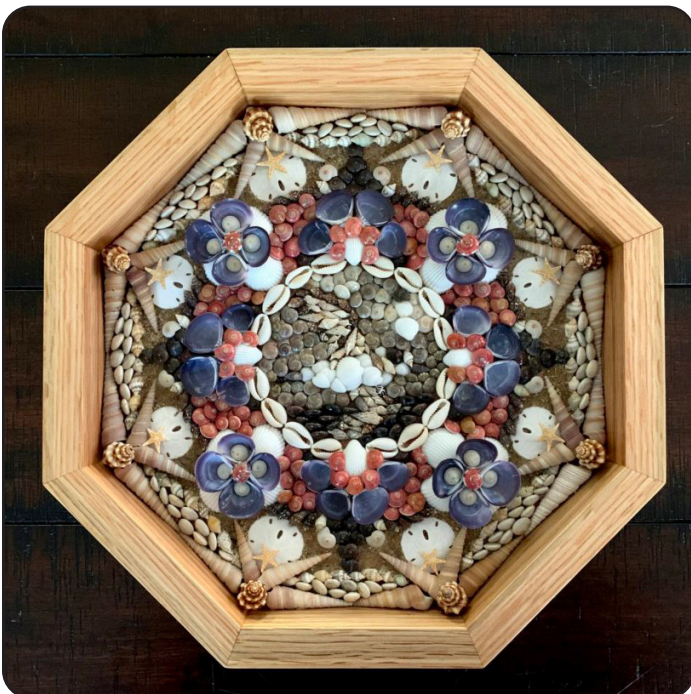
Top left: Showing off my Sailor's Valentine while standing in front of a watercolor painting of the vacation home where we stayed. This page: a variety of purchased and found shells, sand dollars, and starfish comprise my design. The center of the composition showcases two embroidered patches, a ship-in-a-bottle, and shells collected into miniature bouquets.

{tim's valentines}



This page: My father worked sand, sea glass, and a variety of shells into his composition. The centerpiece of his Sailor's Valentine is a Christmas ornament surrounded by rings from the Flying Horses Carousel, including the coveted brass ring.

{matt's valentines}



This page: The central focus of Matt's two Sailors' Valentines is wildlife: a Petrel in flight and a Great Northern Pike with "MN" spelled out with shark teeth.

{portrait of the artist}

{judy dinnick}

Born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and raised in Don Mills near Toronto, Judith McClaskey graduated from the Ontario College of Art and developed a passion for the decorative arts. She married Michael Dinnick in 1962 and after moving with her young family to Lyford Cay in Nassau, Bahamas she continued her creative pursuits while raising her children. "We lived in the Bahamas for many years and became acquainted with antique collections [of Sailors' Valentines] owned by friends", she said in a 2018 interview with *Antique Trader* magazine. She started making them herself in 2004 after her husband had a stroke. "I was looking for an art form to do at home."

Ms. Dinnick became passionate about Sailors' Valentines and shell art and served as a mentor to many other shell artists. For the past two decades, she was celebrated as one of the foremost creators of Sailors' Valentines. She won numerous awards at the annual Sanibel Shell Show in Florida, and was featured in several publications. Her work is featured in *Contemporary Sailors' Valentines: Romance Revisited* by Pamela Boynton (Schiffer, 2016). In executing her exquisitely detailed Valentines, she painted the miniature centres herself and incorporated natural colored shells from all over the world.

It takes a lot of time (and money) to create a finished Sailor's Valentine. Boynton explains that a 10-inch Valentine takes about 60 hours to complete and sell for about \$2,000.

"I like to incorporate my love of painting into my Valentines," she has said of her style, "I almost always begin with a painting for the center and then complete the shell work with colors that are harmonious throughout the entire design."

Judy Dinnick passed away on January 31, 2020 from COVID-19.

Her legacy continues through her website: <http://www.sailorsvalentineart.com/> and on Instagram: @judysshells



Sources: *Sailors' Valentine Art by Judy Dinnick*, <http://www.sailorsvalentineart.com/>; Obituary for Judith Dinnick, *The Globe and Mail*, <https://www.legacy.com/ca/obituaries/theglobeandmail/name/judith-dinnick-obituary?n=judith-dinnick&pid=197666188>; "Contemporary Artists Carry On Sailors' Valentine Tradition", *Antique Trader*, <https://www.antiquetrader.com/art/contemporary-artists-carry-sailors-valentine-tradition>; @judydinnick and @judysshells, Instagram.

{the avant-garde}

Katherine N. Crowley Fine Art & Design

{on view}



A Gathering of Friends Art Show

August 1-30, 2022

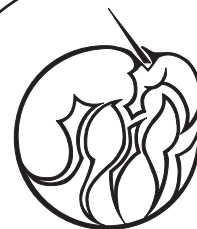
Each year, a gathering of friends trek to Lake Erie to paint the landscape and enjoy time together. Gallery Art Center is hosting a month-long show of the fruits of their labor.

{opening reception}

Saturday August 6, 2022
3:00-6:00pm

Gallery Art Center
4725 Reed Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43220
@GalleryArtCenter

Katherine N. Crowley Fine Art & Design



Summer Show

Elizabeth Veldey, Chair | Mary Jane Ward, Judge

June 11 - August 31, 2022

Virtual Gallery | www.WorthingtonAreaArtLeague.com/2021-summer-show/



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{all around the town}

The Columbus Cultural Arts Center (<http://www.culturalartscenteronline.org>)
 "Daughters of Athena", August 5 – September 10 MAIN GALLERY
 "Katie B Funk! - Red, White, Freak / Wash, Wring, Repeat", LOFT GALLERY

The Columbus Museum of Art (<http://www.columbusmuseum.org>)
 "Raphael—The Power of Renaissance Images: The Dresden Tapestries and their Impact", July 15–October 30
 "Cartas de Cuba—Letters from Ohio", August 4–September 18

COSI (<http://www.cosi.org>)
 "Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes" Ongoing

The Decorative Arts Center of Ohio (<http://www.decartsOhio.org/>)
 "Chronicles: The Great Depression & the Pandemic", May 21–August 28
 "Watercolor Paintings from the Pump House Guys", May 21–August 28

Dublin Arts Council (<http://www.dublinarts.org>)
 "Fred Ripley: Train Interpretations", August 2–September 10

The High Road Gallery and Studios (<http://www.highroadgallery.com>)
 "Michael Bush: Here Comes the Sun", July 1–August 13

The King Arts Complex (<https://kingartscomplex.com>)
 "24th Annual Heritage Music Festival", Thursdays, August 4–18

McConnell Arts Center (<http://www.mcconnellarts.org>)
 "Worthington on the Walls", July 14, 2022 – August 31

Ohio Craft Museum (<https://ohiocraft.org>)
 "Food Justice: Growing a Healthier Community Through Art", July 24–September 25

OSU Urban Arts Space (<http://www.uas.osu.edu>)
 Online art exhibits & engagement
 "Kiln Meeting", July 26–August 13

Pizzuti Collection (<http://www.columbusmuseum.org>)
 "I Hear America Singing: Contemporary Photography from America", June 3, 2022–January 22, 2023

The Riffe Gallery (<http://www.oac.ohio.gov/Riffe-Gallery/Exhibitions>)
 "45th Annual Juried Exhibition: Watercolor Ohio 2022", July 30–October 7

The Wexner Center (<http://www.wexarts.org>)
 "Portal For(e) the Ephemeral Passage", June 10–August 14

{performing arts}

BalletMet (<https://www.balletmet.org>)
BalletMet Announces the 2022-2023 Season Opening in September

CAPA (<https://www.capa.com>)
 "An Evening with The High Kings", August 5, Southern Theater
 Jazz Arts Group "Fifty Years Forward with Rachel Azbell and Micah Thomas", August 5, Lincoln Theater
 "The Glenn Miller Orchestra", August 10, Palace Theater
 "CAPA Summer Movie Series, June 16–August 14, Ohio Theater
 "Byron's Birthday Bash Hosted by Columbus Jazz Orchestra", August 26, Lincoln Theater
 "Vivo & Chamber Orchestra Columbus", September 4, Southern Theater

CATCO (<http://www.catco.org>)
CATCO Announces the 2022-2023 Season Opening in November

Columbus Symphony Orchestra (<http://www.columbussymphony.com>)
CSO Announces the 2022-2023 Season Opening in September

{and beyond}

The Akron Art Museum (<http://www.akronartmuseum.org>)
 "Reflections on Perception", April 9–September 11

The Museum of Fine Arts Boston (<http://www.mfa.org>)
 "Philip Guston Now", May 1–September 11

ICA Boston (<http://www.icaboston.org>)
 "A Place for Me: Figurative Painting Now", Mar 31–September 5

The Cincinnati Art Museum (<http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org>)
 "Truth and Inspiration, An ArtsWave Showcase", July 15–August 14

Contemporary Arts Center (<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org>)
 "Breaking Water", Through August 14

The Cleveland Museum of Art (<http://www.clevelandart.org>)
 "The New Black Vanguard: Photography between Art and Fashion", May 8–September 11

The Art Institute of Chicago (<http://www.artic.edu>)
 "Cezanne", May 15–September 5

Dayton Art Institute (<http://www.daytonartinstitute.org>)
 "Van Gogh & European Landscapes", Through September 4

Detroit Institute of Art (<http://www.dia.org>)
 "Van Gogh in America", Ongoing

Indianapolis Museum of Art (<http://www.imamuseum.org>)
 "Juan de Pareja: A Painter's Story", Through September 4

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (<http://www.lacma.org>)
 "Lee Alexander McQueen: Mind, Mythos, Muse", Through October 9

Minneapolis Institute of Art (<http://www.artsmia.org>)
 "Teo Nguyen: Viet Nam Peace Project | Teo Nguyen: Giac Mo Hòa Bình", Through June 18, 2023

Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC (<http://www.metmuseum.org>)
 5th Ave: "The African Origin of Civilization", Ongoing
 "In America: A Lexicon of Fashion", Through September 5
 "In America: An Anthology of Fashion", Through September 5

Museum of Modern Art, New York (<http://www.moma.org>)
 "Barbara Kruger", Through January 2, 2023

New Orleans Museum of Art (<http://www.noma.org>)
 "Louise Bourgeois: Paintings", Opening September 9

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (<http://www.cmoa.org>)
 "Cauleen Smith: Pandemic Diaries", Through September 6

The Warhol, Pittsburgh (<http://www.warhol.org>)
 "Paola Pivi: I Want It All", April 22–August 15

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (<http://www.sfmoma.org>)
 "Shifting the Silence", April 9–September 5

The Toledo Museum of Art (<http://www.toledomuseum.org>)
 "Momentum | Intersection", Opens September 15

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (<http://www.nga.gov>)
 "The Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan and James McNeill Whistler", Through October 10

The Smithsonian American Art Museum & The Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C. (<https://americanart.si.edu>)
 "We Are Made of Stories: Self-Taught Artists", Through March 26, 2023

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